

“Healing
the Wounds
of War”

El Paso VA
Health Care System
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Health Trends

Vaccination IN ADULTS

By Debra Motto, M.D.

As we near the end of another influenza season and approach spring, it is a good time to review vaccination in adults. Vaccination recommendations are directed at providing or maintaining immunity against certain infectious diseases, to lower their prevalence and help prevent their spread.

In the United States, where 80 percent of preschool children are vaccinated against targeted diseases, less than 500 children die annually of vaccine preventable disease. Sadly, however, between 50,000 to 70,000 adults die each year in the United States of vaccine-preventable influenza and pneumococcus.

More than 90 percent of influenza deaths occur in people over 60 years of age. Elderly people also get sicker from influenza. Flu vaccine is recommended for people at risk of complications of influenza, especially

- ☑ those over 50 years of age
- ☑ residents of nursing homes or chronic care facilities
- ☑ people with chronic heart or lung disease, including asthma
- ☑ people with neurologic conditions which weaken their cough
- ☑ People with diabetes, kidney disease, or sickle cell anemia
- ☑ People with immune systems suppressed by medications or HIV
- ☑ women who are pregnant during influenza season
- ☑ family or health care workers who may transmit influenza to sick patients.

Influenza is a fever causing respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. It occurs in epidemics. Changes in the surface proteins on the virus worldwide are tracked by the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and the WHO (World Health Organization). Every year a new vaccine is designed to prepare for viruses most likely to circulate in the U.S. that year. This is why we get new influenza vaccinations each year.

Pneumococcal vaccine, “The pneumonia shot,” is to protect against a common bacterial cause of re-

spiratory illness, meningitis and sepsis. As the pneumococcus germ becomes more resistant to common antibiotics, vaccination is even more important. More people die from pneumococcal infection (estimated 40,000 annually in the U.S.)

than from any other vaccine-preventable disease.

The “pneumonia shot” is not required for people with normal immune systems. Among those vaccinated, a single revaccination at age 65 is recommended if over five years have passed from the original vaccination. Influenza and pneumococcal vaccine can be given at the same time.

Tetanus is a wound infection caused by a bacterial toxin. The bacteria live in soil or animal intestines and if it enters a wound, it produces a toxin which acts on nerves controlling muscle activity. Although one million cases of tetanus occur annually in the developing world, tetanus is rare in the U.S., due to vaccination. Tetanus in the U.S. occurs among non-immune individuals. After the original three-shot series for tetanus in childhood, booster shots are recommended every 10 years.

Vaccines also exist for hepatitis A and B viruses. Hepatitis A is spread by contaminated water or food. This vaccine is highly recommended for food handlers. Hepatitis B is spread by blood or sexual contact with an infected person. The hepatitis vaccines are recommended for people with chronic liver disease.

To date, the El Paso VA flu shot clinic has given over 6,721 doses of flu vaccine. Adequate supply of the vaccine is expected. However, even after the flu clinic closes, influenza vaccine will be available at the immunization clinic.



You CAN live with osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis, the most common type of arthritis, is a joint disease that mostly affects cartilage.

Cartilage is the slippery tissue that covers the ends of bones in a joint. Healthy cartilage allows bones to glide over each other and helps absorb shock of movement.

In osteoarthritis, the top layer of cartilage breaks down and wears away, allowing bones under the cartilage to rub together. The rubbing causes pain, swelling, and loss of motion in the joint. Over time, the joint may lose its normal shape, and bone spurs may grow on the edges of the joint. Bits of bone or cartilage can break off and float inside the joint space, which causes more pain and damage.

People with osteoarthritis often have joint pain and reduced motion. Unlike some other forms of arthritis, osteoarthritis affects only joints and not internal organs. It can occur in any joint, but most often it develops in the hands, knees, hips, and spine.

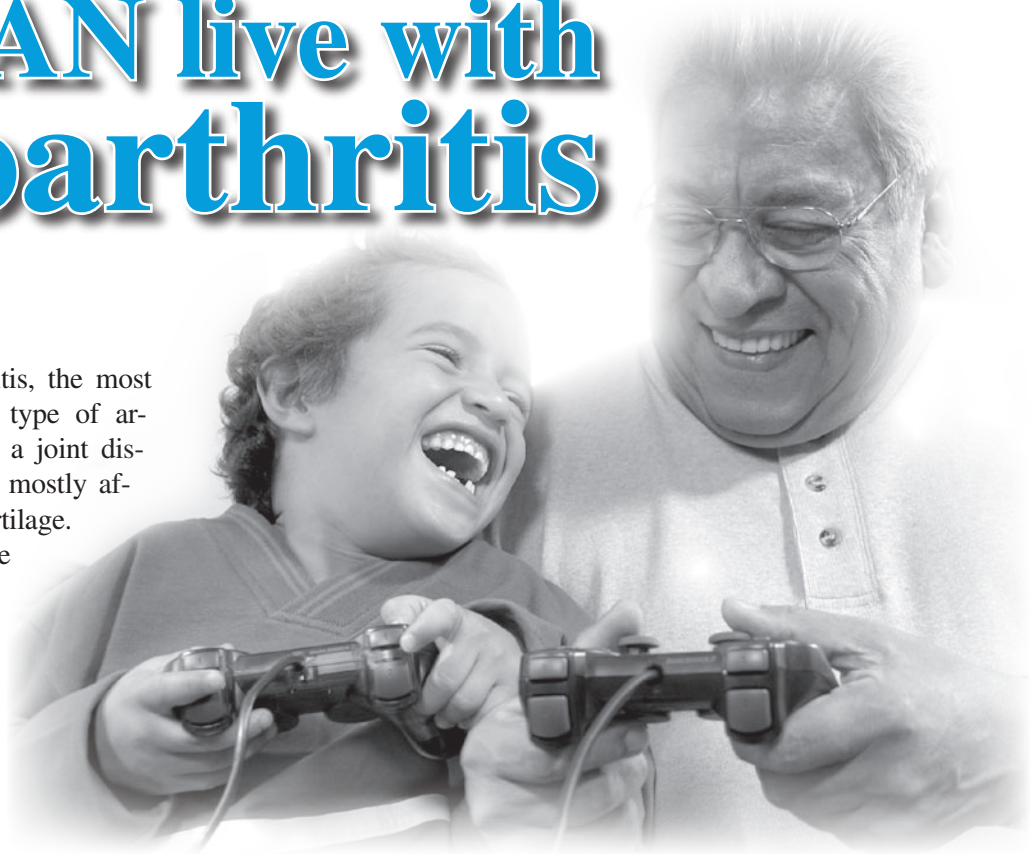
Warning signs of osteoarthritis are:

- ▶ Steady or on-and-off pain in a joint
- ▶ Stiffness in a joint after getting out of bed or sitting for a long time
- ▶ Swelling or tenderness in one or more joints
- ▶ A crunching feeling or the sound of bone rubbing on bone

How is osteoarthritis treated?

Doctors often combine treatments to fit a patient's needs, lifestyle, and health. Osteoarthritis treatment has four main goals:

- ▶ To improve joint care through rest and exercise
- ▶ To keep a healthy body weight
- ▶ To control pain
- ▶ To achieve a healthy lifestyle



Treatment plans can involve:

- ▶ Exercise
- ▶ Weight control
- ▶ Rest and joint care
- ▶ Pain relief
- ▶ Medicines
- ▶ Alternative therapies
- ▶ Surgery

Self-management programs and a good-health attitude can help people:

- ▶ Understand the disease and reduce pain while staying active
- ▶ Cope with their body, mind, and emotions
- ▶ Have more control over the disease
- ▶ Live an active, independent life
- ▶ Focus on their strengths, not their weaknesses
- ▶ Build fitness and healthy eating into their daily routines
- ▶ Develop ways to lower and manage stress

With proper management, many of the symptoms of osteoarthritis can be reduced and you can continue to enjoy many activities. Osteoarthritis is a disease you can live with!

MILK

Good For You at Any Age

Y

ou grew up hearing that milk builds healthy bodies, but did you know that it also helps to maintain one?

Milk not only supports bone health by fighting osteoporosis, it also fights hypertension, colon cancer, and could help you lose weight!

☒ **Bones:**

One of the most significant factors in reducing the risk of fracture as you age is through calcium intake. Calcium is vital in muscle contraction and relaxation, blood clotting and the transmission of nerve impulses. If you don't get the calcium you need in order for your body to function properly, it will pull it from your bones. Include at least three servings of dairy products to your menu each day to maintain healthy bones.

☒ **Weight loss:**

Recent research shows that by including 24 ounces of low fat or fat free milk a day in your reduced calorie diet, you will burn more fat and lose more weight than by just cutting calories. In one study, participants consuming three to four servings of milk or milk products per day in a reduced calorie diet averaged weight losses of 24 pounds in 24 weeks. Studies also indicate that more weight will be lost in the abdominal area when milk is included in the diet.

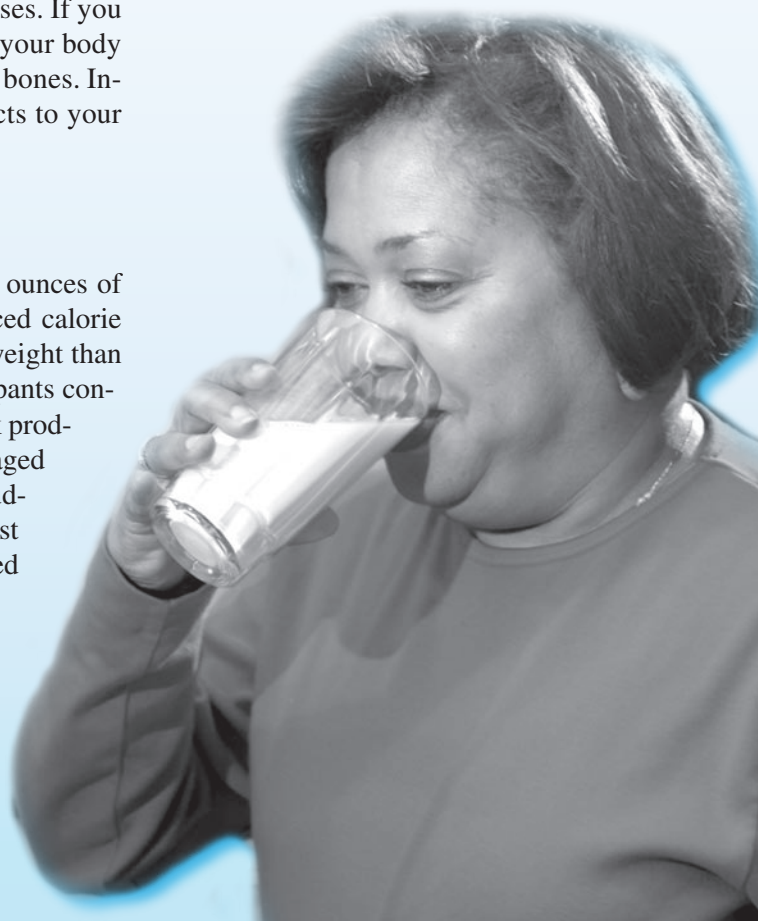
☒ **Hypertension:**

One in four Americans suffers from hypertension, the leading cause of heart disease and stroke. Numerous studies indicate that including low fat or fat free milk in your low fat diet will help to reduce hypertension.

☒ **Cancer:**

Recent research indicates that consuming at least three servings of low fat dairy products per day may help to reduce the risk of colon cancer, the third leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. Although this area of research is new, studies have shown positive benefits.

Drink a glass of milk with your grandkids, make a low fat milkshake, eat some cottage cheese, add a slice of cheese to your sandwich, enjoy some yogurt – and remember – milk is good for you at any age.



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

75th Anniversary

On July 21, 2005, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) celebrated its 75th birthday. Anniversaries of any sort tend to evoke similar reflections: the legacy of the past and the promise of the future. The 75th anniversary of the Department of Veterans Affairs is no different.

On July 21, 1930, with the stroke of a pen, President Herbert Hoover consolidated all government activities related to veterans matters into a single agency. In doing so, President Hoover created the original Veterans Administration and set this nation on a course of caring for veterans in ways we doubt he could have imagined.

In 1930, VA treated 54,000 patients in 54 hospitals nationwide. Seventy-five years later, our patient rolls have increased nearly 100 fold, with some 5.2 million patients receiving treatment at 157 VA Medical Centers and more than 850 community clinics. Today, VA runs the nation's largest integrated health care system. Our staff will treat veterans with more than 50 million outpatient visits this year and fill more than 100 million prescriptions.

VA professionals do their jobs so well that a recent RAND Corporation study revealed that VA patients receive significantly better care than private-sector patients. The headline of a July 18 article in *U.S. News*

and *World Report* noted VA hospitals "are models of top-notch care," and a January 2005 article in the *Washington Monthly* aptly described the VA Medical System as "the best care anywhere."

The Veterans Health Administration is also responsible for more than 10,000 medical research projects that are currently underway. Over the years, this legacy of research has resulted in VA playing a key role in the development of the cardiac pacemaker, the CT scan, and improvements in the treatment of high blood pressure, diabetes and other ailments.

VA has been home to three Nobel Prize winners, and more than half of the physicians practicing medicine in the United States today received some of their training at a VA Medical Center. In this way, VA touches the lives of virtually all Americans.

VA remains a most remarkable story in American history. On July 21, we began a year-long observance of the 75th anniversary

of VA and it is our pledge to use this occasion to build on the VA legacy. It is a legacy of a governmental department staffed by more than 235,000 professionals dedicated to one proposition: to care for those who have borne the battle, and their widows and their orphans. We are the agents of the American people who want us to care for those who have cared for us, many with their lives and limbs.



Models may be used in photos and illustrations.
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For patient concerns or issues, contact our telephone linked care line at 915-564-6158 or 1-800-672-3782.

Health Trends is designed to provide general health and wellness information and news about services provided by VISA 18. Health Trends is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your healthcare provider.

If you are a veteran, please call (915) 564-6159 for information on smoking cessation classes.
<http://www.va.gov/visa18/News/smoking.htm>

Why You Should Quit Smoking

Spring 2006

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